

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

August 5, 2010
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -120

MEMBERS PRESENT: Berta Seltzer, Diana Thompson, Howard Katz, Eileen Rasnack, Bill Merriman, Heidi Ressler, Hannah Kimball, Peg English, Richard Englund, Cindy Sharek, Beverly Heyden

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lynne Robinson, Jullie Gray, Bob Megargel

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy VonWald, Department of Parks and Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Irene Olsen, King County Long-term Care Eastside Ombudsman; Ryan Gold, Gardens at Towne Square; Jeanne Grote.

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by Ms. Kimball who presided. All committee members were present with the exception of Chair Robinson, Julie Gray and Bob Megargel.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 1, 2010

Ms. Thompson called attention to the ninth sentence in the penultimate paragraph on page 7 and noted that "Tukwila" should be changed to read "Northgate."

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. Merriman. Second was by Ms. Seltzer and the motion carried unanimously.

KING COUNTY LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Irene Olson, said she is a certified long-term care ombudsman. She noted that most who serve with the program are volunteers; statewide, there are only seven paid staff. The need for volunteers is great. The ombudsmen visit adult family homes, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes.

Ms. Olson agreed with the focus of the Network on aging in place. She said that is always the ideal, but unfortunately that cannot always be the reality. Needs such as medical, physical or cognitive often are the driving factors that keep people from aging in place. Society in general has been slow to recognize that those needs must be addressed.

The Network on Aging as an organization is doing something about the need, as is the Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. The latter has as its focus protecting the rights of long-term care residents. Dignity and quality of life are rights, not privileges. The program staff and volunteers speak for those who cannot speak for themselves; the ombudsmen serve as problem solvers and facilitators with the goal of empowering the residents to solve problems on their own.

There are some wonderful long-term care facilities operating in the region, but the long-term care ombudsman program would not exist if there were no need. Funding for the program comes primarily from the state's general fund, Medicaid matching funds, Older Americans Act funds, and many local agencies that house the regional programs. The King County program is housed by Solid Ground, which is located in Wallingford.

Ms. Olson said the Nursing Home Reform Amendment guaranteed for the first time rights for nursing home residents. The Older Residents Omnibus Reconciliation Act was approved in 1987 and laid the groundwork for residents rights laws to be extended into adult family homes, assisted living facilities, and state-operated government homes. The big thrust of the Act was participation and facility of administration. Residents have a right to participate in the administration of the facilities in which they reside. Resident councils, which are run by residents, represent the rest of the residents in the building. They meet as often as they want. Food committees and social committees very important functions, especially in the large facilities.

Ms. Olson said there was a facility in the state which in the process of being inspected by the state was found to have a suggestion box in the lobby. The inspector asked to see all of the suggestions that had been placed in the box and asked pointed questions about what had been done about the proposals. It was found the facility had done nothing at all with the suggestions from its residents. Because the residents had not been allowed to participate in the administration of the facility, the building received a major citation.

Access by representatives of the ombudsman program cannot be denied. Furthermore, when residents sign their agreements with a facility, their rights are required to be made clear to them. The ombudsman program operates independently from the state and is free to disagree with decisions made by the state and cannot be censored by any party, except by residents. Additionally, the ombudsmen can only pursue issues for which they have received permission by residents. Residents often choose not to raise issues for fear of being labeled a troublemaker or seeing their level of care diminished. Residents also do not often feel that the adult family home or nursing home in which they are living is their home; they think of themselves as patients, so the ombudsmen work with them to help them understand that the facility they are in is in fact their home and as such they have specific rights.

There is an apparent assumption that everyone over the age of 70 loves to play Bingo, and as such it can be found on the activities calendar of nearly every senior facility. Bible study is another widely offered activity. Most places also regularly serve lima beans and beets. The fact is, those living in senior facility have the right to say what

activities they would like to have offered, or what foods they would like to have served. Facilities are required to make reasonable accommodations. Privacy, visitor access, and a spy-free environment are all important rights that must be honored.

Many facilities ask potential residents to sign documents waiving liability for any loss or theft of items from one's room or for any injury. Even if such a document is signed, it will not hold up in court because facilities do not have the right to ask anyone to waive their rights. Anyone moving into a long-term care facility should carefully read the contract so there is a complete understanding of what is being offered and what services will be provided. Often it is a good idea to have an attorney look over the paperwork. Some facilities say anyone who does not agree to all terms will not be allowed to live in their building, but one can usually counter such statements by offering to get an attorney or the ombudsman program involved.

Ms. Olson said one of the major issue with regard to rights and the invalidation of rights involves the discharge and transfer from one building to another. While it does not occur often, there have been instances where facilities who no longer wish to care for a client simply drop them and their belongings off at a hospital. When the elderly are moved from one room to another, or from one building to another, their lives are totally disrupted and they find it difficult to adjust, especially where cognitive issues are involved. There are valid reasons for moving residents, but even then the rights of the tenants must be honored, beginning with 30 days written notice. Absolutely valid reasons must be cited, and research must be done to find a facility that has a room and is willing to take the client. Even then, residents have the right to appeal, either personally or through a family member.

All name calling is a form of verbal abuse and is not allowed by law. Rough handling is another form of abuse. Isolation as punishment is abuse as well; it is also a form of restraint if the resident is not able to move about on his or her own. Chemical restraint is also used on occasion, though it is not legal unless give for a specific medical treatment.

The local ombudsman office can be called to gain a summary of complaints about a specific facility. Word of mouth is another very good way to find out how good a facility is. The DSHS website includes reports for all facilities, including those against which enforcement activities are under way. Prospective clients can also ask to see the latest survey report.

Asked how many people are in the ombudsman program statewide, Ms. Olson said there about 100 volunteers. New volunteers are added after classes are offered three times each year. Most of the volunteers operate in the western portion of the state. The training sessions occur over a four-day period for a total of 36 hours. Part of the training is in the classroom, and part involves visiting long-term care facilities. Volunteers get to pick which and how many buildings they will visit. The monthly activity reports that must be filled out do not take long to complete. Volunteers are only asked to volunteer a total of four hours per week.

Mr. Katz asked if a process is in place to address issues that are not covered under current state or federal law. Ms. Olson said the ombudsman program puts in a showing during senior lobby days in Olympia. Louise Ryan, the Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, is very actively involved with lawmakers as well.

Ms. Thompson related the story of a friend whose husband had Alzheimer's disease. Toward the end he did not recognize his own wife but was still strong enough to pull her into his lap and make sexual overtures. The wife then went to the doctor and had him put on medication because his actions were more than she could handle. She asked how a similar situation would be handled in a nursing home or other senior living facility. Ms. Olson said much would depend on the person's abilities. Chemical constraints are not always the best answer, but in some cases they can be considered a reasonable accommodation.

Mr. Englund asked how many volunteers are needed statewide to provide the ideal level of service. Ms. Olson said in King County alone only about one-third of the adult family homes receive regular visits by volunteers. The need for more volunteers is significant.

BREAK

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Housing

Ms. Kimball said work continues to develop the website and the embedded links, as well as a description of how the Network is connected with ARCH. Progress is being made.

B. Outreach

Ms. Thompson reminded the Network members of the Farmers Market event scheduled for August 31. She said seven agencies have committed to participating. The Alzheimer's organization has been asked but has not said yet if they will attend; if they do not, the King County Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program will be invited.

Ms. Thompson shared copies of the flyer advertising the event and asked for assistance in distributing them around the community.

With regard to the Bellevue Arts and Crafts Fair, Ms. Thompson said the event went very well. One concern was the lack of access to cold water for those manning the booth. Better signage would also be helpful. Many of the shifts were light in terms of visitors, and a number of fairgoers were just not interested in the information that was available, especially those who were not from Bellevue or Kirkland. There were, however, a number of very good conversations with seniors and their children. A large number of the visitors knew about the Vial of Life program, which was encouraging.

Mr. Katz said he was able to assist an elderly woman who had fallen. He said prior to that the police had discussed the need for an aid station; when the woman fell, they had no bandages or anything. After the woman fell, the police came up with the idea of having a tent next to the Network table that could serve both as an aid station and a place for people to rest in the shade.

Ms. Ressler pointed out that while the Network did not get its message out as much as it would have liked, there was a lot of positive feedback from the community, both locals and visitors, about the state of the city.

Ms. Thompson said Ms. Ressler had agreed to work with the city's volunteer coordinator in drafting an article for the newspaper regarding volunteering opportunities. Additionally, three videos received from AARP are being shown on BTv.

Ms. English reported that she attended the 148th Street mosque open house on July 31 and talked to them about her work with the Network on Aging. They asked to have a Network representative come and make a presentation. Ms. Thompson said the committee members would gladly take that opportunity.

C. Advocacy

Ms. Rasnack said the committee had been focusing on the East Link project and the decisions being made by Sound Transit regarding the hospital station. Ms. Sharek and Ms. Seltzer met with the vice president for planning and marketing for Overlake Hospital, and Ms. Sharek and Mr. Katz attended the open house on July 13 at City Hall. The committee drafted a letter outlining the talking points and forwarded it to the City Council as part of the public hearing on the station.

Mr. Katz reported that he attended the Sound Transit board meeting and presented the Network's talking points, and also spoke on behalf of his neighborhood regarding the hospital station. He said he found it very frustrating to find that the person responsible for siting the station read from a prepared statement about the choice already made; Mr. Katz felt he had not considered the public comments.

Ms. Rasnack said the committee has a subcommittee that is gearing up to work on the legislative forum. Save the date notices will be sent out following the primary election.

Ms. Seltzer pointed out that Mayor Davidson raised the issue of the hospital station with the Sound Transit board. He explained why the Council had a preference for excluding Option D, why the other three would have been acceptable, but why Option B was their choice. Mr. Katz stated that in spite of that testimony, the board chose Option A. Because the station site selected by the board is so far away from the hospital, Sound Transit should at the very least provide transportation between the station and the hospital.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS REPORTS

A. Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative

Ms. Seltzer said the group had quite a discussion regarding the Easter Seal project action workshop. The event is held at several locations around the country and the local event was attended by Ms. Rasnack along with Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly and Francois Larrivee from Hopelink. The objective of having a representative there from the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative was to learn more about the gaps in service and lack of awareness of alternative transportation options.

Ms. Rasnack said the King County Mobility Coalition is looking to absorb some of the highlighted projects into the work it does.

Ms. VonWald said the Eastside Easy Rider Coalition took a look at the action items to see if there was anything it could take on. There were a number of things discussed, and additional discussions will be needed. One of the things that came out of the meeting was that an Eastside Easy Rider Transportation forum was scheduled for October at the North Bellevue Community Center.

B. Eastside Human Services Forum

Ms. VonWald said Ms. O'Reilly approached the Forum to determine if they would like to co-sponsor the legislative forum, which the Forum agreed to do. They have agreed to sponsor food for the event.

OTHER BOARDS/COMMISSIONS REPORTS

Ms. Ressler noted that an event celebrating Indian heritage is coming up at Crossroads. She suggested that might be a good outreach opportunity for the Network.

STAFF REPORT

Ms. VonWald thanked everyone who volunteered at the Bellevue Arts and Crafts Fair, especially Mr. Megargel for setting up the tent.

Ms. VonWald took a moment to thank in advance those who would be helping out at the Farmers Market.

The annual softball challenge took place on July 14. The city team lost again to the senior team which sported a pitcher who was 88 years young.

A. Nominating Committee

Ms. VonWald reminded the Network about the process and noted that the nominating committee meets once in August and again once all the applications are in to review them

and determine which applicants should be interviewed. The committee also conducts the interviews and then drafts a recommendation for the full Network to consider.

Ms. Seltzer, Ms. English, Mr. Englund, and Ms. Heyden volunteered.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Thompson said a number of events are planned for October, including the Senior Lobby Conference on October 13, and the Vulnerable Adult Conference on October 28-29.

Ms. Ressler said a series of events on the theme of innovative and green housing are planned to occur through the fall months. She said she attended one of the events and found it very worthwhile.

Ms. VonWald said the member profile information that was put together was sent to Attorney General Rob McKenna. She said there are no plans to send the information out to anyone else.

Ms. VonWald noted that recently the advocacy committee conducted a vote by email. She reminded the group that the Network had previously agreed not to conduct voting by that means.

Ms. Seltzer proposed adding to an upcoming agenda a discussion about forming a group to communicate both inside and outside of the group things that come up between meetings. Ms. VonWald suggested that a system is already in place. Where speaking points have been approved by the full Network, they can be used by or sent to anyone.

Mr. Katz commented that should an issue arise that needs to be addressed and voted on before the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Network, a special meeting could be called. A quorum is all that is needed to take an official action.

Ms. Rasnack agreed with Ms. VonWald and said the best way to proceed will be to handle things internally and through the regular meetings. Outside of the meetings, the focus should be the talking points. Time-sensitive topics can be made known by emailing the Network members.

Ms. VonWald suggested that if a change in procedure is called for, the bylaws will need to be changed, and that would most appropriately be a retreat topic.

Ms. Thompson suggested each committee should be given the authority to act on matters within their purview.

Ms. VonWald said she could see no need to make a change. There is a process in place that works very well.

Ms. Thompson said she has heard from the AARP that the proposed repeal of the tax on candy, gum and carbonated beverages will have a serious impact on funding senior programs. Ms. VonWald suggested more research would be needed on that topic before going to the City Council asking them to take a position one way or another.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Ms. Jeanne Grote, a member of the Senior Advisory Board and the Special Events Committee, said she recently completed training with Senior Services and is now a volunteer counselor with SHIBA, a program that helps people find answer to Medicare questions.

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. VonWald reviewed the list of items on tap to be discussed at upcoming meetings.

ADJOURN

Ms. Kimball adjourned the meeting at 10:36 a.m.